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Senate

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

O Omnipotent Sovereign God, beneath whose all-seeing eye our mortal lives are passed, may all our deeds and purposes today bring honor to You. Lord, save us from pride and arrogance, and help us to be quick to see the needs of those less fortunate than ourselves and promote goodwill and fellowship among all people.

Today, bless our lawmakers. Let their motives be transparent and their word be their bond. May they be generous in their judgment of others, loyal in their friendships, and magnanimous to their opponents.

Sovereign God, let every knee be bent before You and every tongue confess that You are Lord.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader remarks the Senate will be in morning business until 5 p.m. today.

At 5 p.m. the Senate will be in executive session to consider a couple nominations for United States district judges. One is for Pennsylvania and one is for New Mexico. At 5:30 p.m. there will be at least one rollcall vote on the confirmation of the nominations. The Restrepo and Gonzales nominations are the two nominations we have. Restrepo is from Pennsylvania and Gonzales is from New Mexico.

Following those votes, the Senate will resume consideration of the immigration bill.

BUDGET CONFERENCE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it has been 86 days since the Senate passed its budget. We have been through this on several occasions. We have had Republican Senators come and criticize the Republican leadership here for not letting us go to conference. They talked about their wanting regular order so we could move forward in dealing with the financial crisis facing this country, but they have ignored us.

We are proud of the budget we passed. It was hard, but it reflects our priorities: protecting middle-class families and growing the economy. Even though that is the case, we are still willing to work out a compromise with our Republican counterparts.

We are not going to get everything we want. That is what conferences are all about. They have been going on in this country for more than two centuries. But we believe our sound fiscal policy would stand out as being so much better than what they have done in the House. We could do this through the regular order of the budget process. Unfortunately, Democrats and Republicans are not going to find common ground if we never start negotiating. As I said, for 86 days Republican leaders have objected to a conference with the House of Representatives. In conference, Democrats and Republicans could work together to work out our

differences—differences between our budgets as well as our priorities. But Senate Republicans have objected to a conference time and time again.

Today, I read in the Hill newspaper called Politico that the House Republicans are more than happy for their Senate colleagues to obstruct and delay. They know a budget conference would only put the spotlight on divisions within the House Republican caucus. Here is what the article said:

Going to conference to match the House and Senate-passed budgets—or making any movement on the budget right now—could open up a schism in the [Republican] caucus on spending that for months leadership has managed to keep mostly at bay.

So what they are saying is the Republican leadership over here is protecting the House. The House Republican leadership understands they cannot agree on anything—nothing. Therefore, objecting to this is the right thing to do because they will never get out in the open as to how crazy their budget priorities are.

But as Senate Republicans cover for their dysfunctional House colleagues, the country inches closer to another crisis: a default on the Nation's bills.

Reasonable Republicans are just as concerned as I am about this last manufactured crisis—a crisis that would undercut the economic progress of the last 4 years. Those reasonable Republicans have come to the floor repeatedly to call on Republican leaders to stop blocking bipartisan budget negotiations. I hope those reasonable Republicans prevail. I hope Republican leaders in the House and in the Senate will stop bowing to tea party extremists and listen to the more reasonable Members of their caucus.

I repeat, Republican Senators have arrived here on the floor on more than one occasion and criticized our not being able to go to conference. So if past is prologue, using the full faith and credit of the U.S. Government as a political hostage will not only be bad

• This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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for the economy, it will also be bad for the Republican Party.

It is time Republican leaders acknowledge that compromise—not reckless brinkmanship—will put America on the road to fiscal responsibility.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

Mr. REID. Mr. President, for 16 years, Blanca Gamez thought she was an average American girl. But when she turned 16, one by one her friends learned to drive. Her parents sat her down and explained an important truth she did not know at the time: She could not get her driver's license because she is an undocumented immigrant.

Blanca's parents brought her from Mexico to the United States when she was 7 months old. Because they came without proper paperwork, she was missing something really important. Blanca's parents told her: "You need nine numbers." That refers to a Social Security number, which she did not have. A Social Security number—those nine numbers—opens doors to American citizens, which American citizens take for granted.

I had an opportunity to visit with Blanca when I was in Las Vegas recently. She is a young woman with everything going for her. She is smart, she is driven, and she loves this country with a passion that is truly moving. In fact, she does not remember the country she was born in, Mexico. She was 7 months old when she came here. To her home means Nevada. That is our State song: "Home Means Nevada." And home certainly means Nevada to this young woman.

Unfortunately, without a Social Security number—those nine numbers—Blanca faced challenges her American-born peers simply did not.

But all that changed a year ago this week when President Obama signed a directive suspending deportation of upstanding young people such as Blanca who were brought to this country as children. As a result, she now has her nine numbers.

Almost 300,000 DREAMers—undocumented immigrants who came to this country as children—have already taken advantage of this opportunity.

Thanks to President Obama's courageous action, Blanca and hundreds of thousands of upstanding young men and women like her can rest easier knowing they are no longer in danger of being deported. They can now drive, they can work, and they can get the nine numbers that unlock a successful future—I repeat: a Social Security number.

Blanca's future—and the future of 800,000 young DREAMers—will remain uncertain until Congress passes commonsense immigration reform. President Obama's directive is only a temporary solution.

The Republican majority in the House of Representatives has taken aim at the DREAMers, voting recently

to resume deportation of promising young people such as Blanca.

The directive does not address the 10 million people living in this country without the proper documentation who do not qualify for deferred action. Many of these individuals are the parents or siblings of DREAMers such as Blanca. The bipartisan legislation before the Senate is the opportunity they have been waiting for. This bill offers a pathway to earned citizenship that begins by going to the back of the line, paying penalties and fines, working, paying taxes, staying out of trouble, learning English, getting right with the law.

The measure will be good for national security, it will be great for the economy, and it will be good for millions of immigrant families.

The bill is not perfect, but it takes important steps to reform our broken legal immigration system and strengthen border security.

I know many of my colleagues have ideas about how to improve this bill. I hope we will be able to process additional amendments soon so we can give these ideas the debate they deserve here in the Senate and, after that, of course, the votes they deserve.

We have five amendments pending. We could vote on four of them right away. I also think it would be fair to add the Heller amendment. That would mean three Republican amendments and two Democratic amendments.

My colleagues should be aware, unless we begin voting on amendments soon, we will need to work through the weekend in order to finish the bill before July 4.

Recognizing that this is a Nation founded by immigrants, I hope Senators will consider every amendment to this bill with compassion. Like generations before them, Blanca's parents and millions of other undocumented immigrants came here seeking a better life. The famous author C.S. Lewis said:

You are never too old . . . to dream a new dream.

It is time for Congress to help 11 million dreamers—young and old—get right with the law and unlock their potential.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Would the Chair announce the business of the day, please.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MURPHY). Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 5 o'clock p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Vermont.

COMMENDING THE MAJORITY LEADER

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, as always, I commend the distinguished majority leader for his words on immigra-

tion reform. We are on this bill because he set this time aside, and he, like I, hopes we will soon be voting on amendments. There are a lot of potential amendments, just as we had 300 amendments filed in the Senate Judiciary Committee. We were able to work through them. I know we do not expect that many here on the floor, but I know the leader has set aside time for us, and I know his commitment to get this filed and fulfilled, and I joined him on that. I think the time is right. We either do it now or we are never going to do it.

So I thank the leader again.

MANDATORY MINIMUM SENTENCES

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, there are two matters I want to talk about. Before I speak about the immigration, I want to speak about the Supreme Court ruling today in *Alleyne v. the United States*, that facts underlying mandatory minimum sentences must be proved to a jury beyond a reasonable doubt.

I continue to believe our criminal justice system's reliance on mandatory minimum sentences is a mistake.

In March, Senator PAUL and I introduced the Justice Safety Valve Act of 2013, to give Federal judges greater flexibility in sentencing in cases where a mandatory minimum is not only unnecessary but often counterproductive.

Mandatory minimum sentences imprison some people, particularly non-violent offenders, for far longer than is just or beneficial.

Looking at it just from a fiscal point of view, as a result of mandatory minimums the Federal prison population has exploded in recent years. This has placed enormous strain on the Justice Department's budget. That means less money for Federal law enforcement, less aid to State and local law enforcement, less funding for crime prevention programs that make us safer, plus less money for prisoner reentry programs.

Sentencing reform has worked at the State level. The Justice Safety Valve Act is an important step toward the sentencing reform our Federal system desperately needs. I applaud the Supreme Court decision today in *Alleyne*. I have long felt that when legislative bodies pass mandatory minimums, it is a feel-good response to crime, but it does no good.

Judges need discretion. Every case that comes before a judge is different. Now, do judges always get it right out of the tens of thousands of cases that come before them? No. Of course not. Sometimes they might not, but they are far more often right than wrong. They are always more right than a legislative one-size-fits-all approach. Mandatory minimum laws are one size fits all. Anybody who has spent time in the criminal justice system either as a defense counsel or as a prosecutor or as a judge knows that one size does not fit all. We should get rid of all of our mandatory minimums, have real standards